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A Road Map for Dismantling Institutional Racism in Nonprofits and Other Public Facing Institutions

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Seven Principles For Starting to Dismantle Institutional Racism

1. Three paradigm shifts are needed to recognize that:
    a. racism is not a thing of the past.
    b. the purpose of racism is to maintain White power and privilege.
    c. the receipt of White power and privilege shapes White people.
2. All work starts from the analysis that predominantly White institutions have been structured to serve White people.
3. The work of dismantling racism does not begin where you think it might.
4. We need to evaluate by results not intentions.
5. White people need to work with White people while in accountable relationships to People of Color.
6. The money (funding) matters.
7. Supporting each other is essential.

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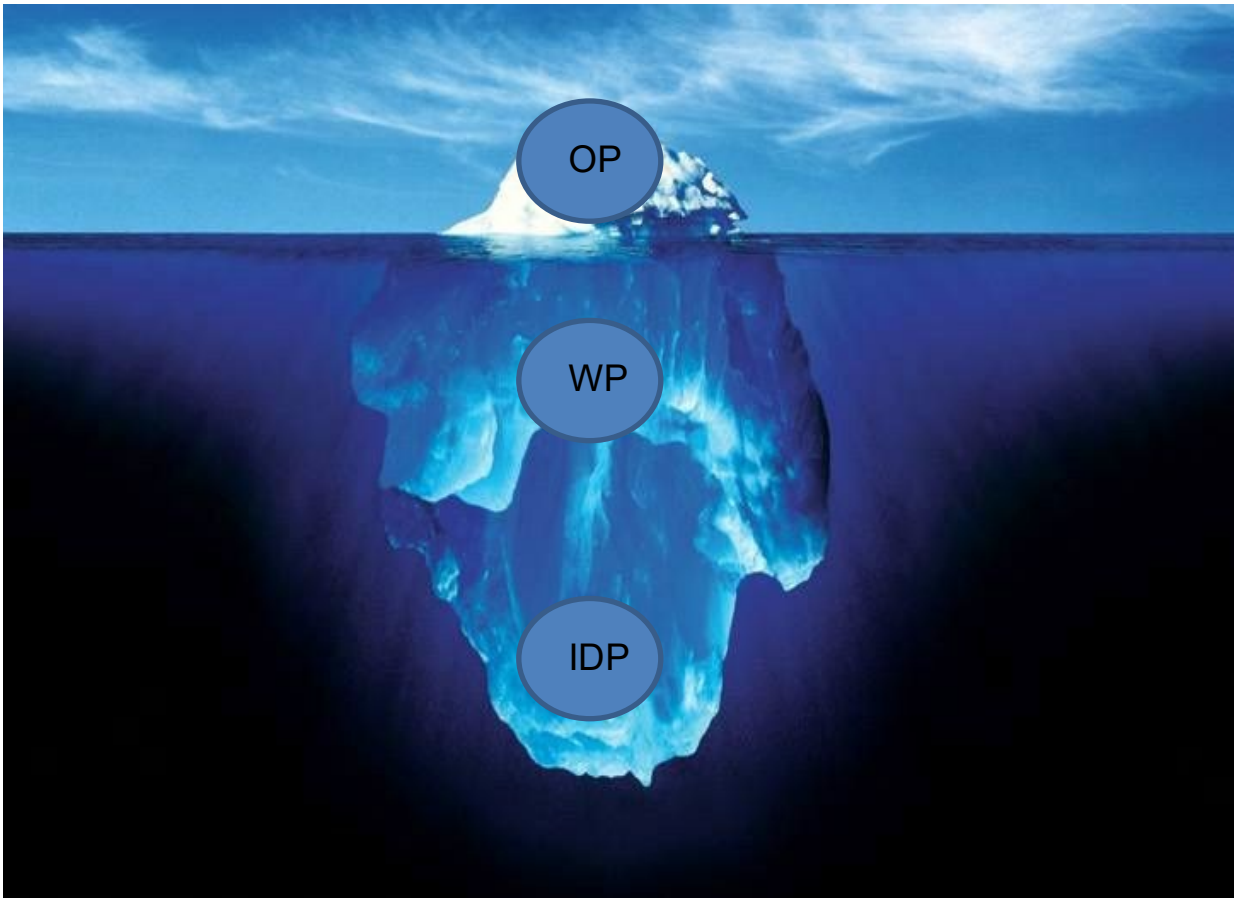
The Racism Iceberg

This Roadmap for Dismantling Institutional Racism is built around the metaphor of an iceberg. What is above the waterline – oppressive power – can easily be identified (e.g., overt discrimination), but changes are not sustainable unless the structural racism below the waterline – White power and identity power – is addressed (e.g., policies, procedures, and institutional practices). What is below the waterline supports what is above.



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Starting at the top of the iceberg, the areas to be addressed are:

1. Above the Water
    a. Personnel
    b. Programs
    c. Practice
    d. Policy
    e. Procedure
2. Below the Water
    a. Constituency
    b. Structure
    c. Mission, identity, and purpose

General Principles

- Work below the water makes work above the water sustainable.
- The tasks listed above do not have to be completed in the order listed, but your work is likely to fail, People of Color are more likely to leave your institution's staff, and you are more likely to succumb to backlash if you start above the water.
- Developing accountable relationships within and outside your institution is the best possible way to ground your efforts.
- Recognize that dismantling racism helps you do your job in your institution better. Full stop.

Top three initial actions you can take?

- Train your staff and board to develop common vocabulary, common analysis, and common practice and vision;
- Do an anti-racism audit that is led by constituents, professionals, and members of the BIPOC[1] community;

[1] "BIPOC (short for Black, Indigenous and People of Color) is a contemporary, umbrella term for non-European, nonwhite people, who comprise most of the world's population. BIPOC includes people of African, Asian, Southeast Asia, Latin American, Pacific Island, Native Hawaiian, Native American/Indigenous or mixed racial-ethnic ancestry." From R2hub.org (3/4/2026)

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- Make public your commitment to anti-racism through your mission statement, signage, and web presence.

Work Below the Water

Mission, identity, and purpose

- Claim an anti-racist identity.
- Make that anti-racist identity public.
- Do the research needed into the racial history of your institution; reckon with that history; right the wrongs of that history.
- Practice a clearer, more specific vocabulary about racism and anti-racism.
- Conduct an anti-racism audit.

Structure

- Prepare your board or oversight body to support your anti-racism efforts
    - diversify the board;
    - provide anti-racism training to the board;
    - ask the board to hold you accountable for initiating and carrying through a 1, 5, and 10-year plan to dismantle racism in your organization;
    - develop that anti-racism plan.
- Have explicit conversations about authority and accountability and how they are shaped and formed by race.
- Consider how you can develop accountability of your institution to communities of color.
- Ask if your institution's structures are preparing you to resist Oppressive Power (OP), Identity Power (IDP), and White Power (WP)? Evaluate whether those structures are helping or hurting those efforts. Change the structures so that they can better support that work.

Constituency

- Ask:
    - How is the constituency of your nonprofit named?
    - Who do you claim as constituents publicly? Which constituency do you

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actually serve?

- How does the discussion of and history about your nonprofit reveal or render invisible the naming of the racial identity of your constituency?

Work Above the Water

Procedure

- Implement procedures that hold your staff accountable for embodying anti-racism behaviors in the work of your nonprofit.
- Establish procedures for responding to and challenging expressions of racism as they appear in your nonprofit organization at all levels of the racism iceberg, not just Oppressive Power.
- Set up procedures to prioritize BIPOC vendors.
- Evaluate procedures for greeting visitors, responding to emergencies, onboarding new staff members, etc., for how they reflect White norms and standards. Change where needed.

Policy

- Conduct regular anti-racism audits of your policies for at least the first five years of your anti-racism plan.
- Set a standard of evaluating all your anti-racism actions by results not intentions.
- Examine your investment portfolio. Find ways to direct resources to businesses owned by members of the BIPOC community.
- Develop new policies that set expectations for anti-racist behaviors in the workplace.
- Establish annual evaluation criteria that ask how staff/faculty have pursued and promoted anti-racism through the positions that they hold.
- Incentivize and reward staff/faculty who proactively promote anti-racism work in your institution.

Practice

- Conduct an inventory of cultural patterns within your nonprofit, especially around time, conflict, dress, leadership style. See: "The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture" from *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001.

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- Eliminate discriminatory practices and inherent privilege within your nonprofit based on results of anti-racism audits.
- Evaluate specific ways in which the stated policies of your organization are not backed up actual practices, particularly when those practices negatively affect BIPOC members or provide privilege and power to White members of your organization.

Program

- Challenge and invite the local White community to join your institution in the work of dismantling racism.
- Support the local BIPOC community to empower and support their efforts to dismantle racism.
- Create a welcoming and affirming space by making your anti-racism commitments as an organization apparent, transparent, and consistent.
- Develop programs and curriculum that undermine Internalized Racial Superiority (IRS) and Internalized Racial Oppression (IRO), which are both part of Identity Power (IDP).
- Seek out additional ways to support White people and People of Color as they challenge racism.
- Develop relationships with local groups who are actively working to challenge racism.
- Ask permission to go to the cultural, political, and meeting spaces of the BIPOC community to listen and learn; avoid requiring them to go to your cultural, political, and meeting spaces. Set aside funds to compensate BIPOC leaders for their consultation and advice.

Personnel

- Enact and develop deliberate recruitment strategies to diversify your nonprofit's staff/faculty.
- Foster and build up local members of the BIPOC community to become staff and/or faculty members.
- Put mentoring practices in place to support BIPOC community members on your institution's staff/faculty.

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